



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 102-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 7, 2022

To: **Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,**
Senator Kate Lieber, Chair,

Re: **SB 1518** – Adds Reach Code to state building code as specialty code – **Support**

Because the League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and planet, LWVOR supports climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations.

SB 1518 revisits the Reach Code concept developed in [HB 2398-A](#), which passed out of the House Committee on Energy & Environment in 2021. The bills are identical other than minor corrections or clarifications.

As cities work to reach their Climate Action goals, they have been unable to require more stringent energy efficient building codes within their boundaries. During public testimony for last year’s bill, twelve jurisdictions and the League of Oregon Cities spoke up in favor of a uniform, statewide Reach Code for use in municipalities that endorse emissions reduction goals. The uniform code adoption allows for familiarity with the code for developers and contractors working in several jurisdictions.

The implementation of the Reach Code by local jurisdictions can serve as an incubator to advance the adoption of new construction techniques and cost-effective technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from residential and commercial buildings. This testing-ground for new adoptions will inform the development of the base code to meet the improved efficiencies required every three-years.

[Analysis](#) by the Building Codes Division (BCD) shows that a 10% increase in energy efficiency results in a 1-4% increase in material and labor costs. This relatively small initial cost increase is balanced by significant ongoing reductions in utility bills. If increased construction costs result in added financial hurdles for affordable housing and entry-level home buyers, these may be addressed by future incentives as reviewed by the Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services.

Adding a jurisdictional Reach Code has raised concerns that Reach Codes would not receive same the robust review as the base code. As written in the bill, the same BCD process for adopting and amending residential and commercial building codes will be applied to the Reach Codes. BCD has the necessary sector and code expertise; fiscal analysis for HB 2398-A reported that one permanent, full-time Operations and Policy Analyst 4 position would support BCD’s Reach Code development.

Most of the buildings built today will be in use for the next 50 years. The climate legacy we leave our great, great grandchildren will be measured in the decisions we make now.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for SB 1518.

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